

William Ferguson Informational Site

Address: 661 Alfred

Local		
State	v	11/14/74
State Marker	v	7/22/75
National		



William Ferguson¹



Historic Overview:

*William Ferguson, Michigan's first black legislator lived on this site. Born in 1857 to the family of one of the state's first black doctors, he was educated in Detroit schools. Successful in printing and real estate, he also became a lawyer and in 1889 when he was expelled from Gies' European Hotel Restaurant for refusing to eat in the colored section, he filed suit. Defeated in lower court, he and his lawyer D. Augustus Straker, appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. In *Ferguson v. Gies* (1890), the court ruled that separation by race in public places was illegal. The ruling propelled Ferguson to a prominent position in the black community, and he was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 1893 and 1895. He died in 1910.*

Text as written on Michigan Historical Marker.

¹ Picture courtesy of: <http://www.michiganhistorymagazine.com/portfolio/twenty-five/ferguson.html>

